

July 26, 1968

To

Dean Bayless Manning

From

Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics

*-re your draft article.*

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Dear Bay,

I really did enjoy your article very much and I have only a few rather minor comments. Page 1, the last paragraph, implies that intra-specific zoocide occurs commonly among other animal species and I would question that. In fact, I have to give a small weight to a principle that is awfully Spencerian because it has been so much exaggerated but that is that the ~~kind of~~ intra-specific competition (that the abrogation of the customary inhibitions that prevail among other animals) may have been an important element in accelerating the evolution of the human brain. It is hard to see any other process besides competing with other humans that could have impelled such an explosively rapid evolution.

Along the same lines your reference to a hundred thousand years as the history of an ethical prescription against homicide seems overdrawn. I need only remind you of the defense of "Englishry" against an allegation of murder that prevailed during the Danish administration of Great Britain. The process that does deserve comment is the gradual extension of the privileged group from ones own family, to ones own tribe, to ones own nation, to that of common humanity. Page 3, at the bottom, you still do need the word 'suddenly' although it's implied in the first paragraph of page 4. Page 7, there is I believe at least one case of the prosecution for euthanasia. I don't remember the name but it was in 1949 or 1950 in New Hampshire, and it excited quite a bit of public interest at the time so it must be in the newspapers. The doctor was acquitted and subsequently received only a rather mild punishment from his professional society. Page 8, there is a nice discussion of penalties for suicide in Granvill Williams. He mentions forfeiture of property for successful suicide. And imprisonment for unsuccessful attempts. Suicide pacts have, of course, been treated more viciously. Page 8, the last paragraph, one might at least remark that aggressive refusal of consent by next of kin for the termination of medical care would hardly do a doctor any good. Page 11, last paragraph - this is not a suggestion that you add anything to your text, but it is perfectly plain that political considerations had to be taken into account in the terminal care of the late Senator Kennedy. Page 14, in the second paragraph, you refer to the 'sure death' of the other, I think 'sure doom' might be a more accurate phrase. Page 23, about futuristic writing, let me recommend to you a book "The Future as Nightmare" H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians" by Mark Hillegas, Oxford University Press, 1967". He very neatly covers just the literature you are interested in. The bottom of page 24, "cracking the genetic code" is a cliché. The code really has been cracked. You're talking about a much larger surround of information about human development. That is probably just a technicality but a confusing one, nevertheless.

At the very end, I would suggest 'typhoon' rather than 'monsoon'.

Any how, let me emphasize that the points I've just listed are very minor and how much I did enjoy the piece altogether.

*Joshua*

B. MANNING